

# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
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DEAR MEMBER,

Knowledge of food conditions on the continent of Europe is causing growing concern throughout the country. A large majority of the clergy of the dioceses of London and Southwark have declared their desire to support every effort that the Government may make to bring relief to the suffering allied peoples. The National Peace Council recently brought together an influential group of people to confer about the situation, and the conference was addressed by Mr. Dingle Foot, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

## HUNGER IN EUROPE

The Greek Government have issued a memorandum, summaries of which have appeared in the press. The conditions which it describes are appalling. The Greek people are dying in the streets from hunger. The number of deaths in Athens and the Piraeus in the four months from October to January is estimated at 40,000, which is eight times the normal mortality. Half the population of the city have been fed this winter at public feeding-centres, but the proportion of calories in the food supplied was only one fifth of the minimum required for ordinary health. Deaths throughout the country are reckoned to be 9,000 daily. Diphtheria and whooping cough are working havoc among the children and typhus is raging. Conditions in the Greek islands are equally tragic.

A report on "Rationing in Axis-Occupied Countries" has been issued by the Inter-Allied Information Committee in London (to be published shortly by the Stationery Office). Figures are quoted as showing whole populations receiving official allowances containing 1,100, 700, 400 and even 250 calories per day as contrasted with the League of Nations standard of 2,400 calories as the minimum for the maintenance of health. The food situation in Belgium has been described by recent arrivals in this country as alarming. The deficit of essential foodstuffs is 60 per cent. in the case of adults and adolescents and 50 per cent. in the case of pregnant mothers. Half the children in the towns go to school without breakfast. Cats are sold for 100 francs and upwards in the black market.

The tale is continued with facts about under-nourishment in Czechoslovakia, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Serbia.

Adults can suffer severe restrictions of diet without permanent ill-effects, and parents make immense sacrifices for their children. Small children fall an easy prey to disease, but it is on adolescents that the effects of malnutrition, physical, mental and moral, are most damaging and most permanent. In other words it is upon those to whom we look for the rebuilding of Europe that the scourge falls most heavily. We have to face the possibility that if the conditions that have been described continue and grow more severe, Europe itself, the home of our western culture, may fall into irretrievable decay.

We must know that these things are happening. We dare not close our minds to them because they are too terrible to think about. What can be done in present circumstances to bring relief is a baffling question. But it must stay with us. We are examining it and will keep our members informed.



## THE CHURCH IN SCANDINAVIA

It is a solid ground of hope that the life of the Church is in some of its parts being kindled by the wind of adversity into new flame. The shortcomings of the Church in all countries are only too evident, and I have not hesitated to call attention to them in the News-Letter. But these very failures only make more striking the fact that it is the Christian conscience that offers to Nazi pretensions an uncompromising resistance. It has been Christian voices that in recent months have publicly denounced injustice in Germany ; the bold utterances of the Bishop of Münster have been followed by other protests from both Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders. Last week's News-Letter told of the stand of the Norwegian bishops and it is evident that this is having a profound influence not only in Norway but in other Scandinavian countries. Here are *acts*, and the whole people can understand their significance. The action of the Church is seen to have an integral relation with the life of the nation.

The Churches in the Scandinavian countries are united to one another by intimate bonds. The reactions of the Swedish Church and nation to the events in Norway have been immediate and emphatic. Bishop Aulen of Sweden, who is widely known outside his own country both through his writings and through his active share in an international Christian movement, has said : " Incredible as it seems, the authorities really imagine that by dismissing Bishop Berggrav they can conquer him and break the spirit of which he is such a doughty champion." And one of the principal Swedish newspapers writes in a leading article :

" It is obvious with what feelings in Sweden, especially within the world of the Church and culture, the message that the Bishop of Oslo, Eivind Berggrav, has resigned, has been received. He was not only supreme in the Norwegian Church and very prominent in the struggles of these days, but he also had quite a unique position in the whole of northern Christianity and in Nordic cultural life. In the struggle for the soul of the Norwegian people and the struggle for the position of the Church *vis-à-vis* the State, and for maintenance of law and order, all brought about by the occupation of Norway and the behaviour of the Quisling regime, Berggrav has fully realised his duties as a patriot and a Christian. He has followed his conscience and his religious conviction. Everywhere in Nordic countries his fate will be followed with the greatest attention, and in all Christian hearts prayers for Eivind Berggrav and the Church of Norway will not cease."

## EDUCATION IN THE LORDS

The debate on Education last month in the House of Lords on a motion by the Archbishop of Canterbury was a revealing sidelight on the English situation. It showed for one thing the place which the head of the Church of England holds in the regard and affections of his fellow countrymen ; the sincerity and warmth of the tributes paid to him by almost every speaker were unmistakeable. It was also marked by a striking unanimity in support of the Primate's plea for Christian teaching in the schools. Among the sixteen peers who took part there was not a dissentient voice. It is plain that the attitude to religion in this country is very different from that, for example, in Germany, or in Soviet Russia. From that fact we can take comfort.

But nothing could be more dangerous than to take false comfort. We have had lessons in the military sphere of the disasters that follow on over-confidence, thinking in terms of the past and failure to realise the emergence of new forces. Similar consequences must follow on blindness to the spiritual situation. It has recently been said that a turning away from reality has been the mark of the British mind since the beginning of the century. Even the rude shocks that the nation has suffered have not yet shaken us awake, though the imaginative boldness of the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps to India is a sign of hope.



It was both implied and claimed in the debate that the views expressed by their lordships reflected the mind of the country. This I believe to be a complete and dangerous illusion. Many of the underlying postulates about Christianity, education and the national life were different from those held by large numbers of sincere and thoughtful people. In regard to the specific question of Christian teaching in the schools, it is no doubt true that there is a large body of opinion in the country that desires it and a larger body that is not hostile. It is probably also true that a considerable number of people are alarmed by the drift towards paganism. But it is no less true that those who consciously live by the light of the central Christian doctrines are a very small minority of the nation, and that very many of those who are most active both in thought and in the direction of affairs have deliberately and definitely rejected the Christian faith. The state of things described in the recent Supplement by Professor Hodges seems to me to be nearer to the truth than the assumptions underlying the debate in the Lords.

There are many strong reasons in favour of the specific reforms for which the Archbishop made a powerful and convincing plea. The case for them was stated at length in the Supplement to C.N-L. No. 108. But the case rests on a long view. It is dangerous to make a too easy connection, such as was implied in some of the speeches, between the improvement of Christian teaching in the schools and a cure for the breakdown of morale, as evidenced in the increase of juvenile delinquency, or for the drift towards paganism. Christianity does not work that way. It has no recipe for mitigating the evils of society so long as it pursues false ends. Christianity is a leaven of incalculable power, but a leaven which works slowly through the lives of those who respond to the Gospel call to perfection. To suppose that new regulations about Christian teaching, however desirable in themselves, operating, as they must, through a body of teachers of varying degrees of intellectual apprehension and spiritual attainment, will have an appreciable effect on the convulsions through which society is passing to-day is an illusion.

To recognise it as such is no reason for discouragement but rather for hope. It brings into clear relief both the real difficulty which besets Christian teaching in schools and the real task to which our energies must be directed if our society is to be saved.

The fundamental difficulty about Christian teaching in the schools scarcely emerged in the debate. It is the lack of connection between Christian teaching and the purposes and motives which prevail in our society. It was urged by more than one speaker that the main content of the teaching in the schools should be the Sermon on the Mount. What effect can the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount as a moral code to guide daily conduct in a society, whose practices follow for the most part the rules of the skin-game, have upon young people except to convince them that Christianity is quite irrelevant to life? And, in regard to moral teaching in general, what is the value of moral exhortations to fulfil their obligations to society addressed to those to whom society feels so little obligation as to refuse them the opportunity of earning a livelihood and to give them no sense that the community wants their services?

The real nature of the social and political task of our time, to which education must make its contribution, is not clearly seen until we recognise the need for a *third term* between Christian teaching and the problems of society. The Archbishop emphasised, very rightly, the necessity of a "unifying aim" in education. That is something which needs to be explored more deeply than it was in the subsequent debate. It is an illusion to suppose that in the existing state of our society the unifying aim of national education can be found in anything so remote from present practice as the Sermon on the Mount, or even at the present stage in any general acceptance of Christian dogma. It has to be some secular goal, some conception of a good society which the nation as a whole in its present secularised state of mind believes to be worth fighting and striving for. It must be a society which is at least *compatible* with the pursuit of Christian ends—one in which the Christian leaven is free to do its work. If that is secured the society may be impregnated to an indefinite extent with Christian values.



Sir Stafford Cripps recently told us that "youth in Russia has a burning zeal for its country and its institutions." What we have to work for in Great Britain is a society in which there is sufficient social justice, sufficiently widespread opportunity, to evoke similar loyalty and enthusiasm in the population as a whole. As Christian citizens, confronted with the overwhelming danger of a secular and pagan totalitarianism, we have to fight with all our strength for the establishment of a social and political order in which the virtues and values derived from our Christian and humanistic tradition find expression under entirely changed conditions. We are only beginning to see what is involved in this gigantic task, and it is the growing understanding of this task—an understanding vitalised, deepened and enriched by Christian faith—that must give shape to our national education and supply it with a unifying aim.

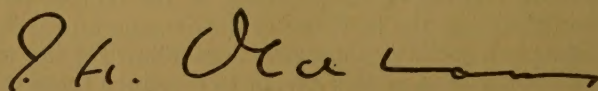
## THE TRAINING GROUND OF THE FAMILY

Two small boys of my acquaintance, who have been expecting their father home from abroad, have consistently refused to eat the chocolate given them at Christmas or to partake of marmalade, of which they are very fond, in order to "keep it till daddy comes." When their father arrived a week or two ago, having safely eluded the enemy submarines, they said to their mother, "Let us put everything on the table and not let him know for three days that there's a war on." Thus children reveal to us in these benighted and furious days the presence and persistence of the world of relationship. This education, acquired in the home or in the school, is the force that can restore the world to sanity ; it is the stuff of which the new world must be built.

## USED ENVELOPES

Many of our members already help us by returning their C.N.-L. envelopes to be used again ; one well-known dignitary of the Church sends us unfailingly a packet every quarter. This kindness is all the more welcome, since the original stock of over a million envelopes is exhausted, and further supplies have to be purchased at more than double the cost. Will you do what you can to help us in this way ? If, in addition, you are able to paste a plain label over the name and address, it will further lighten our task.

Yours sincerely,



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